

MAYOR OF LONDON

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

Date: **10 APR 2014**

Dear Philip

Re: RAF Northolt

It has been brought to my attention by a number of different parties that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) made a decision last year to raise the limit on the number of civilian flights operating at RAF Northolt. I note that the maximum number of commercial air traffic movements will increase from the current 7,000 to 12,000 per year.

Aviation brings with it many benefits. Its adverse impacts, however, can be damaging and profound, and must be carefully considered. West London's airports currently expose hundreds of thousands of people to damaging levels of noise and poor air quality, which is not acceptable. It is a key reason why I strongly oppose the expansion of Heathrow and am calling for the Government to build a new hub airport serving London.

Whilst I acknowledge that there has been local consultation, including with the London Borough of Hillingdon, neither I, the Greater London Authority (GLA), nor Transport for London (TfL) have had any visibility of the process that you have followed, or the grounds on which your decision has been made. While I am not a statutory consultee in this instance, I am mindful of my statutory responsibilities and duties as Mayor of London. I would therefore like to understand:

1. *The consultation of local people, authorities, and relevant agencies that was conducted.* John Reid MP, the then Minister for the Armed Forces, gave assurances to the House of Commons relevant to this on 22 and 30 June 1998 and I attach a summary of his assurances. Given the likely negative impacts on Londoners of the changes proposed, it is disappointing that the views of my officials were not sought during the decision making process, even in an informal capacity.
2. *The assessment of potential environmental and local transport network impacts that was conducted.* I note for instance that the MOD has declared that they would expect 2,500 additional vehicles per year to be placed on the local road network. Officials at TfL have applied a very conservative set of assumptions, and their analysis suggests that the appropriate figure is at least 20,000 and could be much higher.

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I would be very grateful for this information. I would like to continue to work openly and constructively with all government departments to ensure that London remains the world's best City to live and do business in.

Yours ever,



Boris Johnson
Mayor of London

Enc. Statements made in the House of Commons on 22 and 30 June 1998 by the then Minister for the Armed Forces, John Reid MP

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- In an oral answer to a written question by John Wilkinson MP (Ruislip-Northwood) on 22 June 1998, Mr Reid stated that the future of RAF Northolt was being reviewed in consultation with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, against the background of the Strategic Defence Review, the DETR's study of business aviation in the south east and the policies relating to airports. He assured the House of Commons that: "any proposals that even considered changing the status of RAF Northolt would be subject to thorough consultation."
- Subsequently, on 30 June 1998, in a further oral answer to questions raised by John Wilkinson, who was pressing the Minister in relation to the impacts on local people of relaxing the limits on civil aviation movements, Mr Reid stated that he was "well aware of concerns about the impact of flying – especially civil aviation – on the local environment at RAF Northolt, in light of responses which I gave him when he raised the matter previously." Mr Reid then went on to make the following statements:
 - "I can assure honourable members that the concerns of the local community will be an important consideration in all this on-going work [of reviewing the future of the defence estates]";
 - "Consideration of much wider aspects is now taking place. I know that it will raise concerns, and I am trying to assuage the fears of local members and their constituents that anything will be done without maximum consultation or that anything is likely to be done imminently";
 - "I stress that any emerging proposals will be subject to full consultation not only with local individuals and Members of Parliament but with those local authorities and local communities that could potentially be affected. In the meantime – I hope this assures hon. Members – I am prepared to guarantee tonight that while the work is going on there will be no increase in the current ceiling of 7,000 civil movements a year. I am also prepared to guarantee that the airfield's opening hours will remain as they are now and will not be extended. Any change countenanced at any stage would involve the fullest consultation";
 - "No decision is likely in the near future – we are thinking perhaps about the end of this year or the beginning of next year – and even after that there will be maximum consultation".